Reviewer's report

Title: Expression of marker genes in the lymph nodes predicts the recurrence of squamous cell vulvar carcinoma.

Version: 1 Date: 18 November 2011

Reviewer: Omer Devaja

Reviewer's report:

Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
- Scientific question is well defined by the authors

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
- Methods in the paper are appropriate and well described, however I am clinician (surgeon) not expert in molecular biology techniques and I feel that expert in this field should review this paper as well

3. Are the data sound?
- To me this data appears sound

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
- Manuscript adhere to relevant standards for reporting.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
- Discussion is sound however in conclusion I find that based on this small number study it is to ambitious to conclude that this method is comparable to routine pathological LN examination.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
- yes

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
- Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
- My opinion is that title is a bit to far fetch. I am not convinced that expression of described marker genes can reliably predict lymph nodal recurrence.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
- Yes

in the Background authors state that ultrasound-guided fine needle biopsy of the suspicious groin LN's is the staging procedure for vulval carcinoma. Although some centres are using this method in assessing LN's this is not the universally accepted practice.
If I understud the method correctly, half of the lymph node was used for routine histology and other half for RNA isolation. In case of small tumour metastatic deposis in LN it is possible that two parts might have been different in respect of presence of tumour cells. This would have made comparison of two methods inaccurate. I would appreciate authors comment.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests